



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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VENEZUELAN HEROIN KINGPIN
EXTRADITED TO UNITED STATES

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the extradition and scheduled arraignment today of LUIS ALBERTO IBARRA, a/k/a "Jacobo," a/k/a "El Gordo," a/k/a "Henry Jose Teran," the alleged head of a heroin trafficking organization based in Venezuela (the "Organization") responsible for importing more than 700 kilograms of heroin, worth an estimated \$70 million, into the United States since 2001.

At present, 17 members of the Organization have been arrested, and more than 30 kilograms of heroin seized in what has been described by Venezuelan and United States law enforcement as one of the largest joint heroin prosecutions ever brought. IBARRA was formally extradited from Curacao on November 9, 2004, and will be arraigned in Manhattan federal court later today.

The charges were the result of a joint investigation involving cooperation between the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force ("OCDETF"), the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), Bureau of Immigration and Customs

Enforcement ("BICE"), the New York City Police Department ("NYPD"), and the New York State Police, together with the Venezuelan Judicial Police.

According to a two-count Indictment and the formal request for extradition (the "Extradition Package"), IBARRA used human couriers recruited primarily in Caracas, Venezuela to smuggle heroin into the United States from Venezuela by either ingesting pellets of heroin or carrying suitcases in which heroin had been secreted. According to the Indictment, in order to facilitate the couriers' travel from Venezuela, the Organization paid a law enforcement officer who worked at the Simon Bolivar International Airport in Caracas, Venezuela, approximately \$2,500 to \$3,500 per courier per trip. In return, the law enforcement officer allegedly would ensure that the couriers would clear through any security checks at the airport, and intercede if any other law enforcement officer detained one of the couriers.

The Indictment and the Extradition Package further allege that IBARRA's couriers would travel by airplane to the United States and then check into a hotel; once the couriers reached their final destination, they would call IBARRA, who would then contact the local co-conspirators who would then retrieve the heroin.

As part of the investigation, nine of IBARRA's couriers have been arrested attempting to smuggle heroin into the United States, resulting in the seizure of more than 30 kilograms of

heroin. These arrests were made in airports in Queens, New York, Atlanta, Georgia, Miami, Florida and Houston, Texas. All of IBARRA's couriers have pled guilty, and IBARRA's chief manager, Liddy Moya, a/k/a "Beatrice Ruguiero," who was also extradited from Curacao, has also pled guilty and is awaiting sentencing. According to the Extradition Package, IBARRA was arrested by the Korps Politie Curacao, in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, pursuant to a provisional arrest warrant. At the time of his arrest, IBARRA was carrying a false Venezuelan passport.

If convicted, IBARRA faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. The Indictment also seeks forfeiture from IBARRA of \$70 million, based on his importation of approximately 700 kilograms of heroin into the United States.

Mr. KELLEY praised the cooperative investigative efforts of the DEA, BICE, OCDETF, the NYPD, the New York State Police, the Korps Politie Curacao, and the Venezuelan Judicial Police.

Assistant United States Attorneys NEIL M. BAROFSKY, MARC P. BERGER and VICTOR L. HOU are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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